

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Russell Henley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the winner of the 2025 Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard, Russell Henley, to the interview room.

Russell, you pick up your fifth win, 4-under on your last seven holes, including that eagle on 16. Mr. Palmer would be proud with that finish. If we can get some comments on what it means for you to win his tournament.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, you know, I've grown up watching this event and just seeing all the amazing finishes coming down the stretch, and you never really think you're going to get that opportunity to come down the 18th and make a par to win. It's really just hard to take in right now. It's a tremendous honor, and that's what's so cool about this game, is to go play where all the legends have played.

THE MODERATOR: Well, congratulations, and we'll start with questions, please.

Q. Two things. What are you most proud of today?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I would say just my attitude when I bogeyed both par-5s on the front, just really momentum killers. I didn't really feel like I had a great chance at that point, and Collin was just playing so steady, like he always does. So just to hang in there enough to give myself some looks is what I'll take from this day.

Q. Secondly, when the chip came out on 16, was there any concern it was running too hot down the grassless green?

RUSSELL HENLEY: The grassless green. Yeah, I mean, I knew it was probably going to be, I don't know, 5, 6 feet by, but I don't know that you can stop it, you know, with any pace right there. I think Collin hit his a couple feet by. That's just kind of golf. I mean, sometimes you get a good break like that and it hits the pin and goes in. I asked Andy after, and he said he didn't think it would be but 5 or 6 feet by, but I guess I need to watch it on the replay to see how fast it was moving, but kind of surreal.

Q. I guess you said afterwards, were you in shock? You actually said you were in shock. What was that feeling like? Was it kind of surreal?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I mean, it's still surreal wearing this thing up here. I've tried to just work really hard in all aspects of my game to try to put myself in position to win tournaments and compete at the highest possible level on the biggest and best courses, and just crazy that it happened like that. It's just hard to take in. I can't explain it.

Also, just the pressure of knowing that Collin was going to play so steady and knowing that I had to play steady. It almost made me kind of realize it was just so far from over, knowing that I knew he was going to hit great shots coming down the last two holes as well. So just tremendously hard to win out here.

Q. With that being said, are you a man who doesn't show many emotions? Because there was hardly a smile after the chip-in and after the final putt went in.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I mean, I didn't feel like there was much to smile about at that point, just because if I go to the next hole and hit it in the water and then hit it in the water again on 18, then I'm not sitting here, and there's just a lot of really tough golf ahead of me.

So I didn't really feel like it was a time to smile. I felt like it was time to get really focused on what I need to do on my next shot.

Q. You've said in the past you're a low-ball hitter and you felt like had you been improving on courses that maybe you didn't quite fit the bill on always. Would this have been a course three, four years ago that you felt like you could win at?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I don't know that I would have felt like I could win three or four years ago. I'm definitely more confident in the last two years than I was four years ago. When a place gets really firm and fast, it's obviously an advantage for a shorter hitter, and I like it when it gets like that. So I think it plays -- I think if you want the conditions



like that, then it's a positive for you.

Q. Your putting has improved pretty dramatically since working with Phil. Just wondering what you guys have particularly worked on and what that's meant to you.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I can't tell you that. It's a secret (smiling).

No, I've just tried to listen to everything he said. From the start, working with Phil, I've just said, What do you want me to do? Because I was just so lost with my game, with my putting a few years back and just super inconsistent, didn't really have a great plan. He's kind of learned my personality and really just tried to get me to focus on the little details of improving, just set up and start line and how I read the greens and believing, you know, in my process, even when things aren't going well.

So it's not just a little tip here and there with the putting. It's also like he's a psychologist as well, really. He's amazing.

Q. Talk about that putt at 17 because that was a big putt too, that second one.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I knew that it was going to be kind of a weird tricky second shot there. I knew it was probably up against the collar or on that first cut, and my first putt went hard left. I don't know if I pulled it. I don't think I pulled it that much, but I think it got hung up in the grass a little bit off that first cut. I just kind of knew it was going to be hard. Like, I wasn't thinking, oh, man, this is going to be a cakewalk these last two holes. I knew I was going to have to make some putts if I wanted to win.

So I just tried to stay focused, and I did a really good job of going back to my same process, my mental process, how I read the putt, and committing to my line and picked the right line.

Q. When did you feel most nervous, over the last putt or the one at 17 or when?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I think 17 and 18. Yeah, I was very nervous. That was as nervous as I can remember ever being.

Q. More than the Presidents Cup?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I mean, when you're in the moment -- I mean, I guess it's hard for me to, like, rate 'em. Yeah, I mean, I guess maybe I was more at the Presidents Cup. I'm not really sure. When you get that nervous and your

heart's beating that fast, it's hard to even -- it's hard to rate it. I was very nervous, though.

Q. How much did the Presidents Cup experience help you today?

RUSSELL HENLEY: It helped mean a lot. I mean, just, you know, being on the team with these guys, Collin, Scottie, Xander, Patrick, these guys who I've just literally watched YouTube videos of different parts of their game and watch 'em practice and try to get better and learn from what they're doing, how they're handling themselves, because they're beating me. To be on their team and them feel like -- I really felt like they wanted me to be on the team. It gave me confidence in my game and just to keep doing what I was doing.

I've asked some of those guys for advice since then, and they have been really kind to give it to me. Just kind of a cool little family to be a part of.

Q. Russell, Go Dawgs.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Go Dawgs.

Q. In the spirit of what have you done lately for the fans, the last guy who won this tournament went down the road and won a really big one. How does momentum play into your game?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Man, I think it's huge. I mean, you see a couple putts go in or you feel like things are going well, you kind of feel like you're unstoppable, and then make one or two bad swings, get a bad break, and all of a sudden golf feels really hard. So momentum's huge, but, you know, I'm just going to try to focus on now and not later.

Q. We've heard a lot about Arnold Palmer's legacy and how he's given back to the community. Now that you've won a red cardigan, what are some of the charities that you support? And looking forward into the future, what would you like your legacy to be?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, so in my hometown, I support the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, Macon, and the Macon Volunteer Clinic, which my dad started in 2001 or 2000, I think. And in Columbus, Georgia, where I live now, we support Truth Spring. It's a lower school, and it's just amazing.

So I really have just tried to -- my wife and I, Teil and I, just tried to put a lot of our focus on, you know, picking and choosing really wisely and putting a lot of thought into where we give.

Q. I don't mean to dumb this down, but what was the club on 14?

RUSSELL HENLEY: 5-iron. So, you know, I tried to practice straight shots, mainly, and on 9, we just -- I had to hit a cut shot because the wind was off the right, and I couldn't hit a straight to a draw. It would bounce out and just wasn't the right club. That's what these tough courses do. They force you to hit shots that maybe you don't practice a lot. But you just have to hit that shot if you want to have a chance of hitting a good one. So that was a cut 5-iron. I don't remember the last time I -- I don't practice that shot a lot. I'm not trying to hit a high and soft cut 5-iron very often. I'm just trying to hit it straight to a little draw.

So when that one came off and hit the green, I just thought, man, that was a really nice feeling. I told Andy that, and he said, Keep reliving it, man. Keep remembering that shot. That was awesome. So I'll definitely look back that that kind of maybe changed the momentum a little bit.

Q. Secondly, you look at the last two plus, maybe three years, at the level of play you've been at, you now go to number 7 in the world. Do you feel like a top-10 player, and if so have you felt like one for some time?

RUSSELL HENLEY: No, I don't really feel like a top-10 player. I just, I have so much respect for this game and all these amazing players, and it's just, it's so difficult to even put yourself in the position to try to win a golf tournament in these, on the PGA TOUR.

I definitely don't feel like it. I mean, I guess the rankings would tell you that, but I have so much respect for so many players out here who are all so talented, and so it's hard for me to kind of comprehend that.

Q. A little off course here, but growing up in Macon and playing guitar, did that era's musical kind of underpinnings influence you at all?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Did it what now?

Q. Macon. Growing up in Macon. Did that influence your guitar playing?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Oh, influence my guitar playing. Maybe. I always played a lot of guitar, or watched my best friend who is in a band play, and I just kind of watched them. They were definitely educated on the Allman Brothers and the history of music in Macon, Georgia. And it's pretty cool that the Allman Brothers are from Macon, so I'm always bragging about that.

Q. Sure, you should. The other thing, is there something you can apply from playing guitar to golf, and the precision, the discipline, the practice needed, things like that, or just use it to relax?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I don't play much guitar anymore. I do a lot of, I change a lot of diapers and stuff. Yeah, I don't think about it too much. I think that was kind of a long time ago when I played a lot of guitar.

Q. You said a number of times this week the last three years have been your best years of your career. When you're playing as well as you are, is it hard not to ask yourself when is that next win going to come, because it was like almost 900 days.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I mean, it really isn't hard, because I just feel like you can play some amazing golf and not win. I mean, Collin played so awesome this week and he didn't win. That's just the tough part of this game.

I haven't really, because I just feel like there's so many amazing players out here that are so talented, I just, I haven't really put a lot of pressure on myself to win, I've just tried to focus on trying to be really, really good at what I'm good at, try to put myself in the best situation and try to knock on the door as much as I can and get as close to the lead as I can. And kind of have the intent to play to win and put myself in that position, but I haven't really put a lot of pressure on myself to win, just because I know it's just so hard.

Q. You had a chance to win last week at the Cognizant, didn't materialize. Just wondering what you felt like you did differently today or if it felt similar through seven holes and then things flipped?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I chipped awful at the Cognizant. Very basic chip shots, I think I duffed one, hit one thin, hit one way too hard. So just felt like way out of whack with my chipping. Mark Blackburn gave me like a chipping lesson this week, watched me hit some. And I got some balls up and down this week that gave me a lot of confidence.

That was the tough thing about last Sunday is I was playing well, but my chipping was probably the worst in the full field. So kind of tough to win when you can't get a basic chip shot up and down.

THE MODERATOR: Russell, congratulations.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Thank you.

